BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08632 739 0

No. 7351.465

GIVEN BY

Amer. Unit. Assoc.

FIRST CHURCH AND PARISH IN CAMBRIDGE

THE SOWING AND THE VINTAGE

BY

SAMUEL A. ELIOT, DD. LLD.

7551.465

Preached on the occasion of the unveiling
of two tablets bearing the names of
the Ministers and the list
of the Meeting-houses
December 16, 1923

First Church and Parish in Cambridge

THE SOWING AND THE VINTAGE

7551.465

A Sermon by

SAMUEL A. ELIOT, DD., LLD.

Preached on the occasion of the unveiling
of two tablets bearing the names of
the Ministers and the list
of the Meeting-houses
December 16, 1923

PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

BOSTON
THE BEACON PRESS, INC.

American Historical Association
Apr. 10 1924

VANDERBILT
UNIVERSITY

The Sowing and the Vintage

Your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full. Leviticus XXVI: 5.

THE promise in these words is of the unbroken continuity of the gifts of God. There is no break in the chain. A new crop is coming in and the last year's crop is not yet exhausted. As we read on these modest tablets the list of the five meeting-houses and the names of the ministers who have led and served this church during its two hundred and ninety years, do we not of necessity think first of the uninterrupted constancy of God and the unfailing loyalty of his children?

With what persistent fidelity have the successive generations received and transmitted this sacred trust! With what generous public spirit they have reared the meeting-houses and sustained the ministry. How stanchly men and women have taken up their voluntary duties and faithfully maintained the work and worship and perpetuated the spirit and influence of this church. There are, indeed, in our Parish history some dry seasons when the harvest must have been pretty meagre, and some protracted winters when the Sundays must have been pretty dreary, but there have been no real parentheses of spiritual famine. Viewed across the centuries there has been nothing capricious or intermittent in the supply of God's bounty and man's devotion. Always from year to year, from century to century, has the threshing reached into the vintage and the vintage into the sowing time.

May it not be that the special responsibility laid upon an ancient church like this is just this task of preserving unbroken the continuity of the spiritual life? Is it not our

happy privilege at once to conserve and to create? Ours to cherish the good that the past has had and ours to welcome the new supply of nourishing truth fresh from the fields of discovery and toil? Ours to honor the traditions of ancient time and to believe also in the inspirations of the present? Ours to prize our heritage and at the same time to be in whole-hearted sympathy with the age we live in, to feel with it, think with it, speak its language and share its spirit?

The strength of any life, we have been told, can justly be measured by the union and proportion of its sense of continuity and its sense of new beginning. Especially must a religious or educational institution combine the elements of permanence and change. It must be conscious of its hold on the wholesome soil in which it has grown and at the same time be capable of trying new experiments and hazarding new risks. It must combine the stability that comes with maturity and the elasticity of youth. It must constantly reach out for things before and at the same time hold on securely to something behind. "No religion," said one of our contemporary prophets, "can live and be a power in an evolving world, unless it changes and adapts itself to its environment; and no religion can minister to the deepest needs of men unless it reveals permanent and time-transcending realities."

This old church has had, as these tablets remind us, an unbroken history of nearly three centuries but constantly it has been revitalized and reshaped by fresh visions and experiences. It has never been bound to any authoritative creed or in any rigid ecclesiastical system. It has kept its forms of worship and organization flexible and hospitable to new ideas and methods. It has given its adherents large scope for personal initiative and so it has always commanded the allegiance of men capable of breaking the conformities of custom and following untried paths. It has

always worshipped, not a static God who has retired into inaction and passivity, but a God who lives and works to-day. The ministers and people of this church have been pioneers of freedom in fellowship and of liberty under law.

I cannot tell to-day the complete story of these two hundred and ninety years. I can speak only of the beginnings of this church and try to describe the origins of the spirit which we have inherited and which has always been manifested here. What manner of men were they who founded this church and town? To say that they were English Puritans does not tell the whole story, for to many minds of the twentieth century Puritanism seems to mean little more than a harsh and narrow theology and a severe social and domestic discipline. We need to remember that the Puritan movement was one of the most vivid and potent of all the expressions of the eternal spirit of freedom and righteousness. No less an authority than Macaulay said of the Puritans that they were "the most remarkable body of men which the world has ever produced." Carlyle called the Puritan movement "the last of all our heroisms. . . . Few nobler heroisms, perhaps no nobler heroism, ever transacted itself on this earth."

The three Thomases who had most to do with the beginnings of Cambridge were typical Puritans. To follow the careers and describe the characters of Thomas Dudley, Thomas Hooker and Thomas Shepard is to reveal the motives and the strength of the Puritan movement. We can now study these men impartially and intelligently and the more we know of them the more cause have we to rejoice in our inheritances from them.

Thomas Dudley was a man of fifty-four when he came to America. With him came his wife Dorothy, his son Samuel, a youth of twenty-two, and his four daughters, Anne, Patience, Sarah and Mercy. Anne was already the bride of stout Simon Bradstreet, afterwards for many years the

Governor of the Colony. Dudley was a native of Northamptonshire. His mother died when he was very young and when he was but fourteen years old his father, Captain Roger Dudley, was killed fighting on the Protestant side at the battle of Ivry. Young Dudley went into the army with a captain's commission and fought under King Henry of Navarre. When he came back to England he found employment as clerk of the Court of Common Pleas sitting at Westminster. Then he married and took his place in the stirring life of London, the center of all the political and religious agitations of the times. Those were the days when Shakespeare was living in London and when his plays were being produced at the Globe Theatre. The makers of the King James Version of the Bible were at work at Westminster and finished their immortal labors in 1611. Francis Bacon was ruling in the realm of the intellect and Sir Edward Coke was laying the foundations of jurisprudence. Sir John Eliot and Sir Thomas Wentworth were just coming into fame as the protagonists of freedom and autocracy in Parliament. With all these Dudley may well have come into personal relations.

But more than all those were the days when the passion for freedom and the hatred of royal and ecclesiastical oppression were finding utterance in England. The Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity had made nonconformity first treason and then a felony. James Stuart had been King of England but ten months when he summoned the leading clergymen of the party that was beginning to be known as "Puritan" to meet himself and the Bishops in a conference about the government and ritual of the Church of England. In the course of the discussion he lost his temper and stormed as was his wont, and if any doubt remained as to the attitude of the King and the Bishops it was dispelled by the vicious threat with which the King broke up the conference: "I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land."

This purpose the King and the Bishops proceeded to carry out and with all the persecutions Dudley, as an officer of the Court, must have been familiar. He was still a member of the Church of England but more and more his sturdy commonsense, his passion for reality and his hatred of tyranny inclined him to associate with the persecuted Puritans.

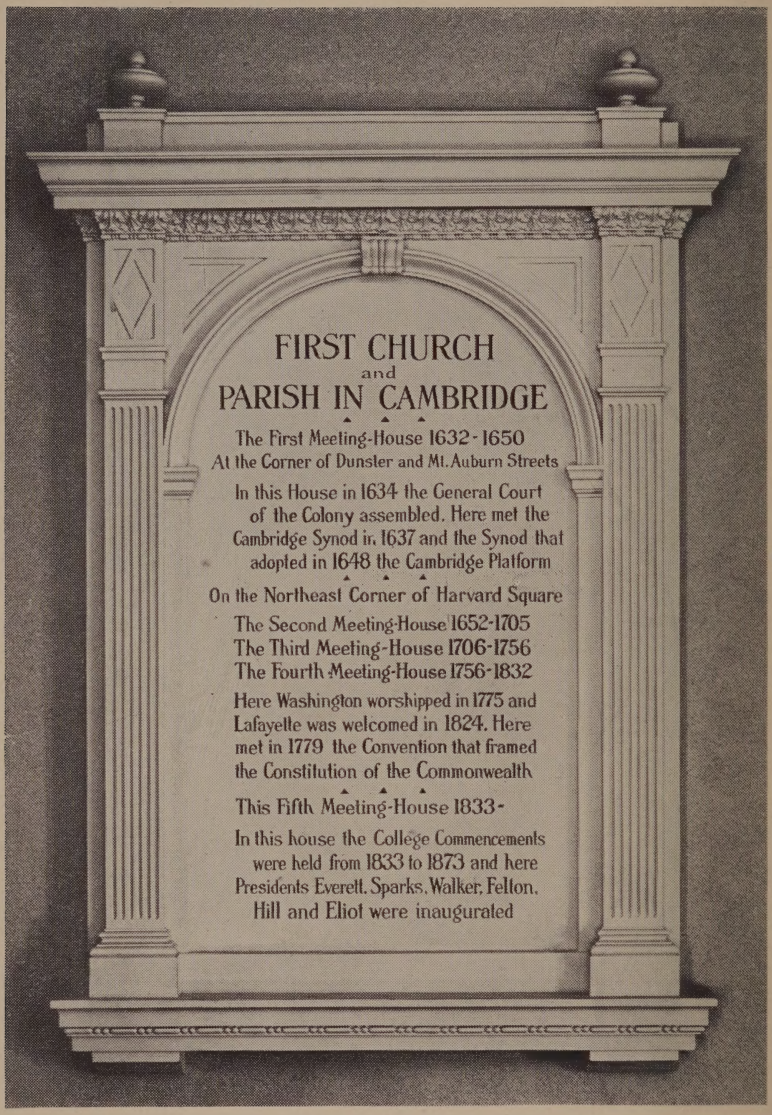
In 1616 he was invited to become the manager of the estates of the Earl of Lincoln, who was at that time the most conspicuous layman of the Puritan party and whose house in Lincolnshire was the center of Puritan consultation and action. The eastern counties of England, the region between the Humber and the Thames, had long been the hotbed of independency. There Puritanism was strongest, there the Pilgrim Church of Scrooby and later of Leyden and our Plymouth, originated, there Oliver Cromwell began his career, and in the Civil War that was from first to last the region in which the supremacy of Parliament was unquestioned. It is not a surprise to discover that, while all parts of England were represented among the early settlers of Massachusetts, two-thirds of them came from the eastern counties. It was not by accident that the oldest counties of Massachusetts were called Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, that the Lincolnshire Boston gave its name to the chief city of New England, and that names like Cambridge, Ipswich, Chelmsford, Lynn, Braintree, Sudbury, Hingham and Needham appeared very early on the map of Massachusetts.

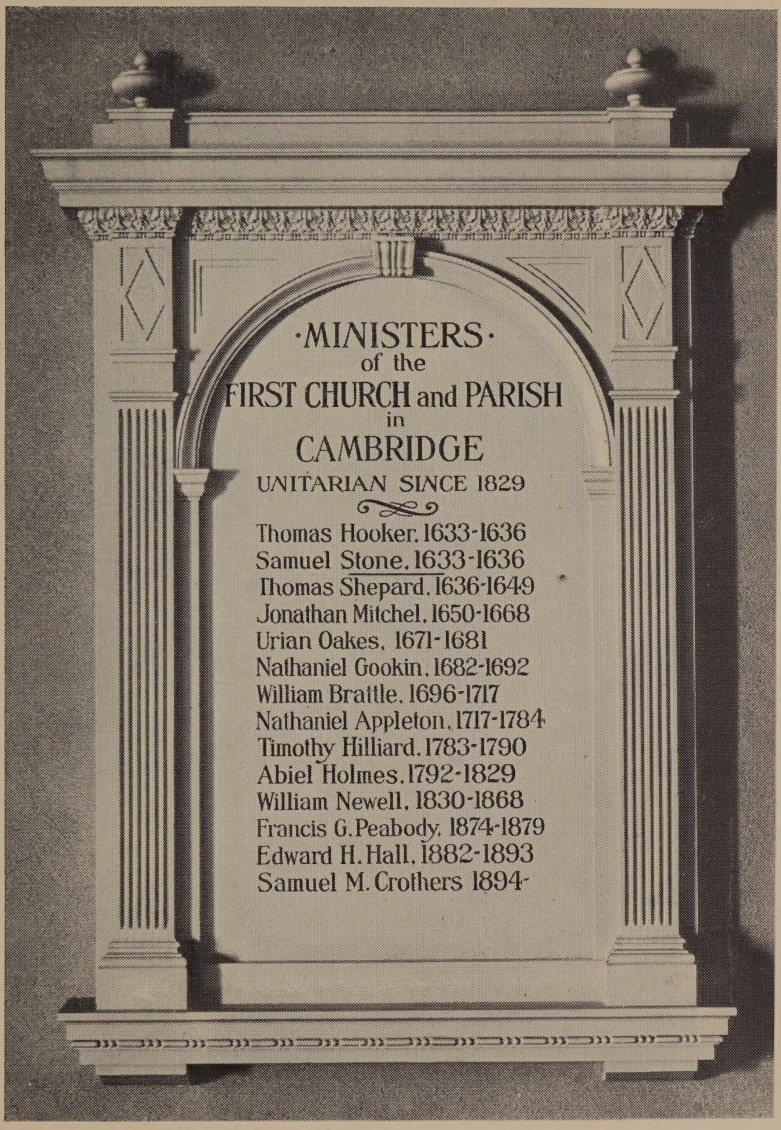
For fourteen years Thomas Dudley discharged the duties of his office as the steward of the Earl of Lincoln, and proved himself a faithful and efficient man of business. Meanwhile, the stupid tyranny of the Stuart Kings and the bigotry of their ecclesiastical agents went on harrying the Non-conformists. Many were the conferences at Boston or around the table at Emmanuel College at Cambridge. It was at a

meeting of these Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire neighbors at the English Cambridge on the 26th of August, 1629, that the agreement to emigrate to America was finally drawn up and signed by the twelve gentlemen, who thereby adventured their lives and fortunes in the effort to plant a colony in the wilderness where they might embody their ideals of a Christian Commonwealth. We have sometimes been led to suppose that Puritanism meant the rule of narrow-minded Calvinist ministers, but the twelve signers of this agreement were all country gentlemen and men of affairs. John Winthrop was elected Governor of the Colony and Thomas Dudley Lieutenant-Governor.

The Puritan exodus began the following spring. Seventeen vessels sailed from England in April and May, bearing nearly one thousand people to the new land. Dudley had before him twenty-three years of conspicuous service and leadership and he never again revisited the pleasant fields of England. His personal history became the history of Massachusetts. He it was, with his family and friends, who established here on the banks of the Charles River, three miles above Boston, the settlement which they called New Towne. He laid out the streets which still exist between Massachusetts Avenue and the river. The house he built was long the chief residence in the place. The Meeting-house was constructed at the junction of what is now Mt. Auburn Street and the lane (now Dunster Street) that ran down to the landing place at the river's brink. The colonists were proud of their Meeting-house, for it had a roof of boards, while the Boston Meeting-house had nothing but thatch. It was the plainest kind of a log building, without aisle or chancel or pulpit, just a desk for a minister, when one could be found, seats in front for the elders and deacons, and benches for the people, the men on one side and the women on the other.

In all his varied career as a leader of the Massachusetts


FIRST CHURCH
and
PARISH IN CAMBRIDGE
The First Meeting-House 1632-1650
At the Corner of Dunster and Mt. Auburn Streets
In this House in 1634 the General Court of the Colony assembled. Here met the Cambridge Synod in 1637 and the Synod that adopted in 1648 the Cambridge Platform
On the Northeast Corner of Harvard Square
The Second Meeting-House 1652-1705
The Third Meeting-House 1706-1756
The Fourth Meeting-House 1756-1832
Here Washington worshipped in 1775 and Lafayette was welcomed in 1824. Here met in 1779 the Convention that framed the Constitution of the Commonwealth
This Fifth Meeting-House 1833-
In this house the College Commencements were held from 1833 to 1873 and here Presidents Everett, Sparks, Walker, Felton, Hill and Eliot were inaugurated


·MINISTERS·
of the
FIRST CHURCH and PARISH
in
CAMBRIDGE
UNITARIAN SINCE 1829
Thomas Hooker. 1633-1636
Samuel Stone. 1633-1636
Thomas Shepard. 1636-1649
Jonathan Mitchel. 1650-1668
Urian Oakes. 1671-1681
Nathaniel Gookin. 1682-1692
William Brattle. 1696-1717
Nathaniel Appleton. 1717-1784
Timothy Hilliard. 1783-1790
Abiel Holmes. 1792-1829
William Newell. 1830-1868
Francis G. Peabody. 1874-1879
Edward H. Hall. 1882-1893
Samuel M. Crothers 1894-

Colony, Dudley showed himself a resolute administrator, a rigid disciplinarian, and above all a man who had a pervading sense of the immediate presence of God in the world and of his own accountability to God. His piety was austere, but his ability, his rectitude, his indomitable fortitude, made him the trusted guide of his younger comrades, and their steadfast reliance in the times of perplexity and peril. His blood flows in the veins of a host of the most distinguished of the sons and daughters of New England. The stock has been fruitful and serviceable to a remarkable degree.

As Thomas Dudley represents the sturdy, masterful Puritan layman, Thomas Hooker, the first minister of this town and church, may well stand as the type of the fervent, liberty-loving Puritan minister. He was born in a Leicestershire village in 1586 so he was ten years younger than Dudley. He graduated at Emmanuel College at Cambridge in 1608 and took his Master's degree three years later. We do well to remember that Emmanuel College was, in the language of a conservative churchman, "neither more nor less than a mere nursery of Puritans." It justified that description for it trained its students in the love of freedom, in zeal for the simplicity of public worship, and in those ideas of church organization and discipline which the Puritans discovered in their Bibles. Its services in equipping the founders of New England were pre-eminent. Of the outstanding Massachusetts ministers the names of John Cotton, John Harvard, Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, Thomas Shepard, and many another less known to fame, are borne on the roll of the graduates of Emmanuel.

From 1620 to 1626 Hooker was minister at Esher, a village some sixteen miles southwest of London. It was a modest post of service, but one which fell in the gift of a Puritan patron and did not require confirmation by a Bishop. Here he married the wife who later accompanied him to America.

In 1626 he became lecturer at Chelmsford, some twenty-nine miles northeast of London. It was the growing habit of the Puritans, when they had a regular parish minister who was not to their liking, to settle a "lecturer" and support him by voluntary subscription. Hooker quickly won a high reputation as a preacher. His intense earnestness, strenuous industry, and vividness of public speech, soon brought upon him the condemnation of the Bishops and by 1629 he had been forced out of his ministry. He was obliged to flee to Holland but continued his preaching at Delft and Rotterdam. He obviously kept in close communication with his former parishioners at Chelmsford for in 1632 a considerable company of these people, together with others from the neighboring towns of Braintree and Colchester, sailed for New England and we find them described in Governor Winthrop's journal sometimes as the "Braintree company" and sometimes as "Mr. Hooker's company." It was evidently anticipated that Hooker would follow his people to America. The "Braintree company" joined themselves to Dudley and his neighbors and built their houses here on the rising ground between the river and the trail they called Braintree Street, and which is now Massachusetts Avenue. Within a year's time the settlement had developed into a compact village surrounded by a palisade.

In 1633 Hooker sailed for New England in company with Rev. Samuel Stone, who was his colleague throughout his American career. Rev. John Cotton of the Lincolnshire Boston, who was coming over to become the minister of the First Church of the Massachusetts Boston, and John Haynes, the leading layman of the "Braintree company," who was afterwards to be Governor successively of Massachusetts and of Connecticut, were also passengers in the "Griffin." The ship's company had plenty of preaching, for Cotton Mather writes: "They had three sermons for the most part every day; of Mr. Cotton in the morning, Mr. Hooker in

the afternoon, and Mr. Stone after supper in the evening."

Hooker found his congregation waiting for him here and the log Meeting-house swept and garnished. On October 11, 1633, he was welcomed as the minister of this church, with Mr. Stone as his colleague. The congregation was then probably the most influential in Massachusetts, not only in ecclesiastical but also in civil affairs. Hooker was rivalled among the ministers only by John Cotton. Thomas Dudley was Governor of the colony and in 1635 was succeeded by his fellow-townsman, John Haynes.

The stay of most of these people here was, however, brief. Some of their number had penetrated to the fertile valley of the Connecticut and thither Hooker, Stone, Haynes and a number of their comrades, migrated in the summer of 1636 and built their new homes at the place which was soon to bear the name of Hartford. It was there on May 31, 1638, that Hooker preached the sermon before the General Court of the little colony that first set forth the fundamental political principles which have ever since governed the development of American democracy. Beyond all the other early settlers of New England he first visioned and described what "government of the people, by the people, for the people" means. He was no less eminent as the interpreter of the new principles of Congregationalism. To his thinking a true church was just a company of Christian people united to one another in the service of God by a voluntary Covenant and knowing no other leadership than that of Christ. He held that each congregation possessed full and complete authority to administer its own affairs, choose and ordain its own officers and govern its own members. That was a revolutionary conception of church organization and it was destined to be vastly influential in the development not only of New England but of all American political and religious life. Hooker died at Hartford in 1647 and he is remembered as the pioneer advocate

of the principle that a self-governing democracy is the proper basis of a Commonwealth and as the great expounder of the characteristic polity of the New England churches.

Thomas Shepard, our next minister, represents a third type of Puritan, a man of frail body and gentle spirit, but a minister "in whose soul the Lord shed abroad his love so abundantly that thousands of souls have cause to bless God for him." We know the man's most private and inner life, for he left behind him a journal which records his personal and spiritual experiences as well as the events of his public career. We know just how he felt, worked, dared and suffered. He was born in a village in Northamptonshire in 1605, "upon the day," he wrote, "and at that very hour of the day when the Parliament should have been blown up by popish priests." His parents died when he was a child and his boyhood was evidently one of hardship. He worked his way through Emmanuel College with a fine reputation for scholarship and resolute purpose. He was appointed Lecturer of the church at Earls-Colne in Essex and here he was brought into close friendship with the stalwart young Puritan squire of that village, Roger Harlakenden, who afterward accompanied him to New England, became, after Dudley's removal to Ipswich, the chief layman of this church and town, and whose body was one of the first to be laid in the graveyard yonder.

The young minister was not allowed to do his work in peace. Soon he was summoned before Laud, then the Bishop of London. The Bishop's sentence upon him was more explicit than paternal: "I charge you that you neither preach, read, marry, bury or exercise any ministerial functions in any part of my diocese, for if you do and I hear of it I will be upon your back and follow you everywhere you go in any part of this Kingdom and everlastingly disenable you." Shepard took time to consider his course. A Puritan made

haste slowly, but he did not go backward or sideways. He spent some months with the Harlakendens and then the Bishop "fired me out of this place," a curiously modern phrase to find in a seventeenth century journal and very apt. He became a kind of chaplain in the family of Sir Richard Darley in Yorkshire and there he married the Knight's kinswoman who thereafter shared all her husband's hardships and died soon after landing in New England.

Then another ecclesiastic drove him from his Yorkshire refuge and his thoughts turned westward. "The light," he wrote, "seemed to have departed from England when Mr. Hooker and Mr. Cotton were gone and the hearts of the godly were set and bent that way." After several efforts to get away he finally evaded the officers of the Ecclesiastical Court and sailed with his wife, his brother, Samuel Shepard, his friend, Roger Harlakenden, and other comrades, and reached Boston on the 3rd of October, 1635. On the second day after their arrival Shepard and his family came to New Towne where he found Hooker and Stone, whom he had known in England, making their preparations to remove to Connecticut. The newcomers were received into the families of Hooker's company and in many cases made arrangements to buy the houses of those who were to depart.

On February 11, 1636, Thomas Shepard was duly installed as minister of this church in the rude log Meeting-house. All the leaders of the little colony, both civil and religious, were present, having come through the forest trails and over the ice-bridged rivers from all about. The proceedings were utterly revolutionary in their character. All these ministers were ordained clergymen of the Church of England, but they proceeded to install Thomas Shepard without any regard whatever to the rites and usages of the old church. He was installed by his own congregation with the assent and with sympathetic words of welcome from the ministers. Here, then, for twelve years Shepard exercised his gifts in a

way that both enlarged his own reputation and served the Colony. He was very active in the beginnings of Harvard College and Cotton Mather tells us that "it was with respect unto his vigilancy and the enlightening and powerful ministry of Mr. Shepard that, when the foundation of a college was to be laid, Cambridge, rather than any other place, was pitched upon to be the seat of that happy seminary." He died in 1649 at the early age of forty-four, leaving behind him a reputation for saintliness unsurpassed by any in the annals of New England.

We discover, then, in these Puritan founders of Cambridge the elements of power which have always profoundly affected the life of humanity. All the great human forces become the servants of the men who carry in themselves the love of freedom, a passion for righteousness and a confidence in unseen and eternal realities. The qualities of these three men — efficiency, steadfastness, foresight and the sense of communion with and commission from God — are the permanent foundations of the Commonwealth.

This is our lineage: to remember it is to be rebaptized into the spirit that has always animated this church. For ten generations this church has borne its witness by the production of a certain habit of mind and type of character. It is an ideal of life that is illustrated and tested to-day in a considerable number of the families of this parish, where integrity and honor, gentle speech, resolute industry and public-spirited activity are transmitted from generation to generation. The power of the associations and ideals of this place to increase happiness, freedom, refinement and honorable serviceableness has been abundantly demonstrated.

Shall we not to-day resolve that this church shall bear its witness, too, through its own organized and institutional life? There is nothing more needed in this distracted world than a living church, rooted in the wholesome soil of an

honorable past but ready to think new thoughts and try new methods and accept new revelations. To my mind it is a vital part of a religious experience to believe not only in spritual realities but in the institutions which bear witness to faith and transmit goodwill. I acclaim loyalty to a church wherein we can turn our abstract ideals into concrete deeds, through which we can enter into the treasures and powers of human wisdom and experience, something that ties us to definite loyalties and which links our private religion to the spiritual experience of the community. We can use acquired momentum here — use, in developing a still nobler future, the mighty impluse of the toiling, sacrificing generations behind us. We can live "*upon* the past, *in* the present, and *for* the future." Thus shall we in our turn make our "threshing reach unto the vintage and the vintage reach unto the sowing time."

Boston Public Library
Central Library, Copley Square

Division of
Reference and Research Services

The Date Due Card in the pocket indicates the date on or before which this book should be returned to the Library.

Please do not remove cards from this pocket.